**Taking Effective Notes**

Taking notes can assist your learning when you need to obtain information, ideas and opinions from reference books and when you wish to have a record of what you hear in the classroom. To make effective notes, you need to understand what you read and listen to. As understanding plays an important part in remembering new information, taking notes will help you memorise new material.

**Making Notes from Books**

Making notes from books requires you to:

* concentrate to decide what notes to take
* focus on the main ideas in what you read
* order your thoughts
* reduce information and make it more manageable
* present notes in a form which will be useful in preparing for essays, assignments, tests or exams

*Stage One - Preparation*

1. Work out what you know about the subject and what you need to know for your present purposes.
2. Survey any books which seem appropriate.
3. Use the table of contents to see what chapters appear useful and the index to find pages which have relevant information. Look at the longer entries mentioned in the index first.
4. Skim read the whole passage you have identified by:
5. looking at the title
6. reading the first paragraph
7. glancing at headings, sub-headings, photos or illustrations and reading the concluding paragraph
8. Decide whether you will use the paragraph or not
9. If you do use the passage, decide what the major heading will be.

*Stage Two - Making Notes*

There is no one way to make notes; but the following approach should be helpful.

1. Decide what your purpose is in summarising this passage. What you need to know might be different from what the author intended to write. You will need to read with your purpose in mind.
2. Asking questions is often a useful way of reading actively. You might ask yourself questions such as:
   * What is the main idea of the passage?
   * Who is involved? Where/when/why/how did it happen?
3. Read the first section of the passage through carefully.
4. Make brief outline notes in point form and in your own words,
   * selecting the main idea
   * any worthwhile supporting ideas
   * any examples which you think need to be included
5. Proceed through the passage one section or one paragraph at a time.

**Other Approaches**

Some people find that developing a graphic overview especially helpful in determining the theme of a passage. They build a model or flow chart to help link the main ideas and see the whole meaning of the text.

Another approach, after initial skimming, is to read the information through carefully, noticing the key words as you read. Without consulting the text, attempt to write a summary and then reread for accuracy.

**Taking Notes from Speakers**

Taking notes from speakers can be useful because it:

* provides a permanent record which can be useful for revision purposes.
* can help you concentrate on what the speaker is saying.

*Suggestions for Note taking*

1. Watch the speaker as much as you can.
2. As you cannot note everything said, concentrate on the argument the speaker develops.
3. Try to jot down headlines and sub-headings which outline the structure of the talk.
4. Note important points in short phrases or single words.
5. Look for clues which the speaker gives to important points through emphasis, repetition and pauses.
6. Learning the sequence which is often followed by speakers when they are presenting an argument may help you work out the structure of many talks. Speakers often start by stating the problem or posing a question. They go on to review the evidence, examine the credibility and then reconcile any conflicting evidence. Finally they draw conclusions and discuss the implications of these.

**Suggestions for Your Notes**

1. Headings and sub-headings can make it easier for you to record and reread your notes. These could be underlined or written in different coloured pen.
2. Notes are written for your eyes alone; however, they should be kept as neatly as possible so that they are easy to read. For the same reason: spread out your notes; leave a line between each section; rule a margin with adequate room for additional comments; rule a single line through any mistakes you make.
3. Develop your own personal shorthand. Some examples of possible abbreviations include:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **/** | the | **etc** | and so on | **&** | and | **c** | about |
| **chn** | children | **C17** | seventeenth century | **v** | very | **<** | is less than |
| **>** | is greater than | **=** | equal to | **cd** | could | **Aust.** | Australia |
| **wd.** | would | **Br.** | British | **w/o** | without | **cp.** | compared to |
| **eg.** | for example | **max** | maximum | **nd** | note well | **min** | minimum |

**Taking Notes: Summary Table**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Full sentences here | One word summary |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Studying Facts!**

Write the information you want to learn in the first column. Put the correct answer in the next column. Each week cover up the answers and have a go. If you get the fact right 3 weeks in a row, cross it out – you know it! Add to your list each weekend as part of your study routine.

ATTEMPTS

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Information you must know | Answer |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |